

force of more than four times that number. But as the spring opened it became daily more apparent that human power and endurance could do no more, and that a forced evacuation of the beleaguered cities was near at hand.

In anticipation of that event General Lee caused the removal of all his surplus material to Amelia Court-house. This point was suitable as a rallying-place for the army on the occurrence of an event which to all observing minds appeared inevitable. Notwithstanding the hopelessness of the contest, nothing was omitted that the genius of the general could devise or the energy and devotion of the troops accomplish.

While Lee was quietly making these preparations in anticipation of an event which was evidently near at hand, and which, if he had been guided by his own counsel, he would have hastened instead of delaying until forcibly driven to it, Grant had begun the concentration of his forces in order to complete his interior cordon or line of investment.

His circle of external investment was now complete, and every line of communication with the more distant portions of the Confederacy was effectually cut off. By the last of March, Sheridan had joined him with his forces from the Valley, while Sherman was moving slowly through South Carolina toward Virginia and Thomas was preparing to advance on the East Tennessee and the Virginia and Tennessee railroads. The next step in the progress of the siege was the seizure of the communications between Petersburg and the South.

While his adversary was thus active, Lee was not idle. He had formed a plan to surprise the enemy's centre by a night-attack, which if successful would have given him possession of a commanding position in the enemy's rear and control of the military railroad to City Point—a very important part of Grant's communications. Lee's full purpose in this movement has been variously surmised by historians. If it was to favor his retreat, as some conclude, it was well devised, since success would have forced Grant to withdraw his left to protect his base of supplies, and thus have left Lee an open road of withdrawal. If it was designed to improve his own position and check the Federal operations against his right, it was equally

well devised, since it might have led to the capture or destruction of Grant's left wing. It was one of those military movements whose purpose is left in abeyance, the future policy of the commander being dependent upon his measure of success and the change in the situation thereby occasioned. Whatever the design in General Lee's mind, the ill-success of the effort rendered it abortive.

The portion of the enemy's line selected for the point of attack lay opposite General Gordon's front, and within about two hundred yards of it, the opposing works being here very close together. Gordon was assigned to the command of the attacking column, whose movement was directed against Fort Steadman, a strong earthwork near the south bank of the Apomattox. The ground in front of the fort was obstructed by abatis, but it was hoped these difficulties could be overcome by a movement under cover of the darkness and the fort reached unobserved.

The column of attack was drawn up before dawn on the morning of March 25th. It consisted of some 3000 or 4000 men, but a considerable force was held in reserve to follow up the attack if successful.

In the early dawn the Confederate column moved noiselessly out into the intervening space and passed swiftly forward, unnoticed by the Federals, whose guards displayed little vigilance. A few minutes sufficed to reach the front of the opposing works, and the surprised garrison of Fort Steadman arose to find their stronghold in the possession of their foes.

All this had been the work of very few minutes, at the end of which time all of the garrison who were not prisoners were flying in a panic from the fort. The guns of the redoubt were at once turned on the neighboring works, and several batteries to the right and left were cleared of their defenders and occupied by Gordon's brave stormers.

Now was the time for the supporting column to advance. Had it done so rapidly, the advantage could have been sustained, and by a seizure of the hill in the rear of Fort Steadman the Federal army would have been cut in two at its centre. For some reason which has never been made very

clear this advance was not made. One of those unfortunate failures in combination which have caused the loss of so many battles here occurred, and the well-devised plan of the Confederate commander came to naught through dereliction of duty, misconception of orders, or whatever may have been the cause of the fatal delay.

Gordon with his small force was left to bear the whole brunt of the Federal assault which quickly fell upon him. Fort Hascall, to the left of Fort Steadman, opened upon it a terrific fire, under cover of which a heavy column of infantry advanced, and something like the scene which followed the mine explosion ensued. A considerable portion of the assailing column was unable to withdraw and remained prisoners in the hands of the Federals, while many lay dead and wounded about the recaptured works. Thus through misconception or mismanagement this promising assault failed, and an early retreat became the only alternative remaining to General Lee.

This unsuccessful effort was quickly followed by a vigorous advance on the part of Grant, who concentrated his principal force south and west of Petersburg with the view of assailing the Confederate right. Early on the morning of March 29th the corps of Warren and Humphreys broke camp and moved toward Lee's intrenchments on the extreme right, while Sheridan, with the cavalry, made a wider sweep and occupied Dinwiddie Court-house, six miles south-west of the point reached by the infantry.

Yet, swiftly and secretly as this movement was made, it did not escape Lee's vigilant eye. He quickly divined where the blow was to fall, and, leaving the works north of the James under Longstreet and those at Petersburg under Gordon but weakly garrisoned, he removed the remainder of his army, consisting of about 15,000 infantry and 2000 cavalry, into the works along the White Oak road.

Here, on the morning of the 31st, Lee made the flank attack which he had so often attempted with success against the Federal columns. Not waiting for the assault, he boldly took the initiative, and fell upon their exposed flank while they were entangled in the intricacies of a swampy forest. So sudden

and heavy was the blow that the divisions encountered hastily gave way. But upon meeting the main body of the Federal troops he found it so thickly massed and well posted as to render an assault hopeless. He therefore fell back to his works.

On the same day Sheridan advanced toward Five Forks. Before reaching that point, however, he was encountered by the Confederate cavalry under the chief command of General Fitz Lee, supported by the infantry under Pickett. A severe combat ensued, in which Sheridan was driven back to Dinwiddie Court-house with considerable loss.

On the 1st of April, Sheridan was reinforced by two corps of infantry, and with this powerful aid he renewed his attack upon Five Forks, which place was carried late in the evening and the Confederates driven back.

General Lee, perceiving that his forces were too weak to combat successfully with the enemy, ordered Longstreet on the afternoon of the 1st to bring his corps with all speed from before Richmond to Petersburg, with the object of supporting his right wing.

Early on the morning of the 2d the Federals renewed the attack, breaking the lines of the Confederates and forcing them from their position. The Federals then took possession of the Southside Railroad with little opposition, while the Confederates fell back toward Petersburg, followed by the victorious enemy. The pursuit was continued until it was arrested by the guns from two redoubts, Forts Alexander and Gregg, which with great gallantry held the enemy in check until Longstreet came up and interposed his corps, effectually arresting the further advance of the Federal columns.

In the conflict here described fell many gallant warriors, chief among them Lieutenant-general A. P. Hill, who was slain while endeavoring to reach Heth's division, which had been ordered to support Pickett on the right. No man had been more distinguished throughout the war for chivalric bearing than this brave soldier. On every field where appeared the Army of Northern Virginia he had borne a conspicuous part, and now in the last battle of that noble army he found a hero's grave.

With the advantage here gained by the Federal army Lee's position at Petersburg became untenable, and nothing remained but a retreat, either to the fortifications about Richmond or to the mountain-region to the west. The description of the course adopted by General Lee and the subsequent events of the war will form the subject of our next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *FROM PETERSBURG TO APPOMATTOX.*

The Last Day at Petersburg.—The Evacuation.—Richmond on Fire.—The Army in Retreat.—The Federals in Richmond.—Grant in Pursuit.—At Amelia Court-house.—The Food-train Missing.—Perilous State of the Army.—Lee's Demeanor.—The Federals at Hand.—Skirmishing.—Capture of Ewell's Corps.—Rations at Farmville.—Engagements with the Pursuers.—Reminiscences of Colonel Jones.—General Wise in his War-paint.—A Delegation to Lee from the Officers.—General Pendleton Describes the Interview.—The Retreat Continued.—Correspondence between Lee and Grant.—Loss of the Stores at Appomattox.—Preparation for Battle.—The Advance on the 9th.—The Final Assault.—Colonel Venable's Relation.—The Flag of Truce.—Lee's "Apple Tree."—Meeting of Lee and Grant.—Their Conversation.—Terms of Surrender.—Lee Greeted by his Army.—Extracts from Letter to Davis.—The Number of Effective Men.—The Army Disbanded.—Lee and Meade.—General Hunter Interviewed.—Lee Returns to Richmond.—At Home.

THE success of the Federal army in breaking the lines of Petersburg had rendered the retreat of the Confederate force imperative. An effort to hold Richmond with every line of communication with the South broken or in imminent danger would have been madness. But by abandoning his works and concentrating his army, which still amounted to about 30,000 men, General Lee might retire to some natural stronghold in the interior, where the defensible features of the country would enable him to oppose Grant's formidable host until he could rally strength to strike an effective blow.

This course was at once decided upon, and early on the morning of the 2d of April, Lee sent a despatch to the Government authorities at Richmond informing them of the disastrous situation of affairs and of the necessity of his evacuating Petersburg that night. Orders were also sent to the forces north of the James to move at once and join him, while all the preparations necessary for the evacuation of Richmond, both as the seat of Government and as a military post, were expeditiously made.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost. The Federal forces were at every point pressing forward upon the Petersburg lines. Fort Gregg had fallen, and the city was strongly threatened. A battery on a hill near General Lee's headquarters was attacked by an infantry force, and had to be withdrawn to save it from capture. Lee mounted his horse and rode back, surrounded by his staff, toward his inner line of defence. His composure was remarkable, considering the situation, and it was in his habitually quiet tone that he said to a member of his staff, "This is a bad business, colonel."

To another officer he remarked, "Well, colonel, it has happened as I told them at Richmond it would : the line has been stretched until it has broken."

As he continued to ride slowly back toward Petersburg the group drew the fire of the Federal artillery, and shells began to burst around them, an officer's horse being killed and other damage done. With his usual undisturbed demeanor under fire, he continued to ride slowly onward until he had entered the line of earthworks immediately surrounding the city, where he was greeted with shouts of welcome by the ragged but unflinching defenders. Orders were given to hold this line, if possible, until night. Fortunately, General Grant did not press his attack, and time was given the Confederates to complete their preparations for withdrawal.

Along the north bank of the Appomattox moved the long lines of artillery and dark columns of infantry through the gloom of the night, over the roads leading to Amelia Court-house. By midnight the evacuation was completed, and a death-like silence reigned in the breastworks which for nine months had been "clothed in thunder," and whose deadly blows had kept at bay a foe of threefold strength.

As the troops moved noiselessly onward in the darkness that just precedes the dawn a bright light like a broad flash of lightning illumined the heavens for an instant ; then followed a tremendous explosion. "The magazine at Fort Drewry is blown up," ran in whispers through the ranks, and again silence reigned. Once more the sky was overspread by a lurid light, but not so fleeting as before. It was now the conflagra-

tion of Richmond that lighted the night-march of the soldiers, and many a stout heart was wrung with anguish at the fate of the city and its defenceless inhabitants. The burning of public property of little value had given rise to a destructive fire that laid in ashes nearly one-third of the devoted city.

The columns from Petersburg and its vicinity reached Chesterfield Court-house soon after daylight. Here a brief halt was ordered for the rest and refreshment of the troops, after which the retreat was resumed with renewed strength. A sense of relief seemed to pervade the ranks at their release from the lines where they had watched and worked for more than nine weary months. Once more in the open field, they were invigorated with hope, and felt better able to cope with their powerful adversary.

The April woods were budding round them, the odors of spring were in the air, the green fields and the broad prospect of woods and hills formed an inspiring contrast to the close earthworks behind which they had so long lain, and as they marched along the unobstructed roads memories of the many victories to which they had formerly been led arose to nerve their arms and make them feel that while they had the same noble chieftain at their head they were still the equal of the foe. Thoughts like these lightened the weary march and gave new spirit to the ragged and hungry but undaunted men.

The retreat of Lee's army did not long remain unknown to the Federals. The explosion of the magazine at Fort Drewry and the conflagration of Richmond apprised them of the fact, and they lost no time in taking possession of the abandoned works and entering the defenceless cities.

On the morning of the 3d of April the mayor of Richmond surrendered the city to the Federal commander in its vicinity, and General Weitzel took immediate possession. He at once proceeded to enforce order and took measures to arrest the conflagration, while with great humanity he endeavored to relieve the distressed citizens. After four years of courageous sacrifice and patriotic devotion the city of Richmond was compelled to yield to the decree of fate and bow her proud crest to the victor. But she felt no shame or disgrace, for her defence



had been bold and chivalrous, and in the hour of her adversity her majestic fortitude drew from her conquerors respect and admiration.

As soon as Grant became aware of Lee's line of retreat he pushed forward his whole available force, numbering 70,000 or 80,000 men, in order to intercept him on the line of the Richmond and Danville Railroad. Sheridan's cavalry formed the van of the pursuing column, and was closely followed by the artillery and infantry. Lee pressed on as rapidly as possible to Amelia Court-house, where he had ordered supplies to be deposited for the use of his troops on their arrival. This forethought was highly necessary in consequence of the scanty supply of rations provided at the commencement of the retreat.

The hope of finding a supply of food at this point, which had done much to buoy up the spirits of the men, was destined to be cruelly dispelled. Through an unfortunate error or misapprehension of orders the provision-train had been taken on to Richmond without unloading its stores at Amelia Court-house, and its much-needed food disappeared during the excitement and confusion of the capital city. As a result, on reaching that point not a single ration was found to be provided for the hungry troops.

It was a terrible blow alike to the men and to their general. A reaction from hope to despair came upon the brave soldiers who had so far borne up under the most depressing difficulties, while on General Lee's face came a deeper shadow than it had yet worn. He saw his well-devised plan imperilled by a circumstance beyond his control. The necessity of speed if he would achieve the aim which he had in his mind was opposed by the absolute need of halting and collecting food for his impoverished troops. Grant was pursuing him with all haste. The only chance remaining to the Army of Northern Virginia was to reach the hill-country without delay. Yet here it was detained by the error of a railroad official, while the precious minutes and hours moved remorselessly by.

By the morning of the 5th the whole army had reached the place of general rendezvous. Bitter was its disappointment to

learn that no food was to be had save such scanty quantities as might be collected by the foraging-parties that had immediately been sent out, and that a distance of fifty miles lay between it and adequate supplies. Yet no murmur came from the lips of the men to the ear of their commander, and on the evening of that unfortunate day they resumed their weary march in silence and composure. Some small amount of food had been brought in by the foragers, greatly inadequate for the wants of the soldiers, yet aiding them to somewhat alleviate the pangs of hunger. A handful of corn was now a feast to the weary veterans as they trudged onward through the April night.

General Lee had never appeared more grandly heroic than on this occasion. All eyes were raised to him for a deliverance which no human power seemed able to give. He alone was expected to provide food for the starving army and rescue it from the attacks of a powerful and eager enemy. Under the accumulation of difficulties his courage seemed to expand, and wherever he appeared his presence inspired the weak and weary with renewed energy to continue the toilsome march.

During these trying scenes his countenance wore its habitual calm, grave expression. Those who watched his face to catch a glimpse of what was passing in his mind could gather thence no trace of his inner sentiments. Only once during the retreat was he perceived to lose the most complete self-control. On inquiring at Farmville why a certain bridge had not been burned, he spoke of the blunder with a warmth and impatience which served to show how great a repression he ordinarily exercised over his feelings.

The progress of the retreat during the night was slow and tedious, the route for the most part lying through farms and over farm-lands, whose condition frequently demanded the aid of the pioneers to construct and repair bridges and causeways for the artillery and wagons, the teams of which by this time had become weak and jaded. The country roads were miry from the spring rains, the streams were swollen, and the numerous wagons which were necessary to transport the munitions of war from Richmond to a new line of defence served to retard

the retreat and permit the Federals to rapidly gain upon the slowly-marching columns.

Sheridan's cavalry was already upon the flank of the Confederate army, and the infantry was following with all speed. On the morning of the 6th a wagon-train fell into the hands of Sheridan's troopers, but this was recaptured by the Confederates. During the forenoon of that day the pursuing columns thickened and frequent skirmishes delayed the march. These delays enabled the Federals to accumulate in such force that it became necessary for Lee to halt his advance in order to arrest their attack till his column could close up, and the trains and such artillery as was not needed for action could reach a point of safety.

This object was accomplished early in the afternoon. Ewell's, the rearmost corps in the army, closed upon those in front at a position on Sailor's Creek, a small tributary of the Appomattox River. While the troops were moving to their destination, and the trains had passed, General Gordon, who commanded the rear-guard, observing a considerable Federal force moving around the Confederate rear, apparently with the intention of turning it, sent notice of this movement to the troops in front, and then proceeded by a near route to a suitable position on the line of retreat.

Ewell, unfortunately, either failed to receive Gordon's message or his troops were so worn out with hunger and fatigue as to be dilatory in complying with orders. As a consequence his corps was surrounded by the pursuing columns and captured with but little opposition. About the same time the divisions of Anderson, Pickett, and Bushrod Johnson were almost broken up, about 10,000 men in all being captured. The remainder of the army continued its retreat during the night of the 6th, and reached Farmville early on the morning of the 7th, where the troops obtained two days' rations, the first regular supplies they had received during the retreat. At Farmville a short halt was made to allow the men to rest and cook their provisions.

The effective portion of the Army of Northern Virginia did not now exceed 10,000 men. This great reduction had been caused

by the disaster of the previous day at Sailor's Creek, by desertions on the retreat, and by an exhaustion which obliged many to leave the ranks. Those who still remained by their colors were veterans whose courage never failed, and who were yet ready to face any odds.

The heads of the Federal columns beginning to appear about eleven o'clock, the Confederates resumed their retreat. The teams of the wagons and artillery were weak, being travel-worn and suffering from lack of forage. Their progress, therefore, was necessarily slow, and as the troops were obliged to move in conformity with the artillery and trains, the Federal cavalry closed upon the retreating army. In the afternoon it became necessary to make dispositions to retard the rapid advance of the enemy. Mahone's division, with a few batteries, was thrown out for that purpose, and a spirited conflict ensued in which the Federals were checked. Other attempts were made during the afternoon to retard or arrest the Confederate columns, which in every instance were repulsed. In one of these encounters General Fitz Lee engaged General Gregg, captured the general, and repulsed his division of cavalry. This occurrence was a source of great pleasure to General Lee, who remarked to his son, General W. H. F. Lee, "Keep your command together and in good spirits, general: don't let it think of surrender. I will get you out of this."

As to General Lee's personal bearing during the events of this retreat, an interesting incident has been furnished by Colonel Thomas G. Jones of Montgomery, Ala., then on General Gordon's staff. He remarks:

"It was noticed that General Lee exposed himself unsparingly to fire. He sat for some time on his iron-gray close beside a section of Chamberlayne's battery, which on the brow of the hill was shelling the advancing enemy, and gazed intently through his glass at the movements of the approaching foe. Receiving a report from a staff officer, General Lee told him he had ridden up on the wrong side of the hill and unnecessarily exposed himself. When the officer remarked that he was ashamed to try to shelter himself when his commander was so exposed, General Lee remarked rather sharply,

'It is my duty to be here. I must see. Go back the way I told you, sir.'

"Forgetful of his own safety at such a time, he cared more for the life of the lowest of his command than for his own."

Colonel Jones's anecdote may be supplemented with one of an amusing character which occurred in the presence of the writer. The event in question, of which General Wise was the hero, took place on the morning preceding the surrender. The general had made his morning ablutions, in the absence of the requisites of a civilized toilet, in a mud-hole in the road, the water of which was deeply tinged with the prevailing red clay of that country. Towels were as scarce as basins, and in the lack of any better method he permitted the water to dry upon his face. The consequence was that his countenance displayed a very decided coating of red clay.

Unaware of the appearance which he presented, mirrors having been left behind with the other impedimenta of civilization, Wise, with his blanket thrown around him and presenting a not inapt resemblance to an Indian chief, walked up to where General Lee was standing in the midst of a group of officers. Despite the gravity of the situation, Lee's face broke into a humorous smile on perceiving the ludicrous appearance of the unconscious officer.

"Good-morning, General Wise," he remarked in a tone of merry pleasantry. "I perceive that you, at any rate, have not given up the contest, as you are in your war-paint this morning."

The laugh that followed at the expense of General Wise was heartily joined in by himself when he discovered its cause and learned what an amusing spectacle he presented in his paint and blanket.

An event occurred on the 7th which must not be omitted from this narrative. Perceiving the difficulties that surrounded the army, and believing its extrication hopeless, a number of the principal officers, from a feeling of affection and sympathy for the commander-in-chief, and with a wish to lighten his responsibility and soften the pain of defeat, volunteered to inform him that in their opinion the struggle had reached a

point where further resistance was hopeless, and that the contest should be terminated and negotiations opened for a surrender of the army. The delivery of this opinion was confided to General Pendleton, who by his character and devotion to General Lee was well qualified for such an office. The names of Longstreet and some others who did not coincide in opinion with their associates did not appear in the list presented by Pendleton. The interview that succeeded is thus described by General Pendleton :

"General Lee was lying on the ground. No others heard the conversation between him and myself. He received my communication with the reply, 'Oh no, I trust it has not come to that;,' and added, 'General, we have yet too many bold men to think of laying down our arms. The enemy do not fight with spirit, while our boys still do. Besides, if I were to say a word to the Federal commander he would regard it as such a confession of weakness as to make it the condition of demanding unconditional surrender—a proposal to which I will never listen. . . . I have never believed we could, against the gigantic combination for our subjugation, make good in the long run our independence unless foreign powers should, directly or indirectly, assist us. . . . But such considerations really made with me no difference. We had, I was satisfied, sacred principles to maintain and rights to defend, for which we were in duty bound to do our best, even if we perished in the endeavor.'

"Such were, as nearly as I can recall them, the exact words of General Lee on that most critical occasion. You see in them the soul of the man. What his conscience dictated and his judgment decided, there his heart was."

Desperate as the situation had become, and irretrievable as it seemed hourly growing, General Lee could not forego the hope of breaking through the net that was rapidly enclosing him and of forming a junction with Johnston. In the event of success in this he felt confident of being able to manoeuvre with Grant at least until favorable terms of peace could be obtained.

A crisis was now at hand. Should Lee obtain the necessary

supplies at Appomattox Court-house, he would push on to the Staunton River and maintain himself behind that stream until a junction could be made with Johnston. If, however, supplies should fail him, the surrender and dissolution of the army were inevitable. On the 8th the retreat, being uninterrupted, progressed more expeditiously than on the previous day. Yet, though the Federals did not press the Confederate flank and rear as on the day before, a heavy column of cavalry advanced upon Appomattox Station, where the supplies for the Confederate army had been deposited.

On the preceding day a correspondence had begun between the two commanding generals, opening in the following note sent by General Grant to General Lee:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE U. S.,

"5 P. M., April 7, 1865.

"GENERAL R. E. LEE, COMMANDING C. S. A.,

"GENERAL: The results of the last week must convince you of the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia in this struggle. I feel that it is so, and regard it as my duty to shift from myself the responsibility of any further effusion of blood, by asking of you the surrender of that portion of the Confederate Southern army known as the Army of Northern Virginia.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"U. S. GRANT,

"*Lieutenant-general commanding Armies of the U. S.*"

To which General Lee replied:

"APRIL 7, 1865.

"GENERAL: I have received your note of this day. Though not entertaining the opinion you express on the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia, I reciprocate your desire to avoid useless effusion of blood, and therefore, before considering your proposition, ask the terms you will offer on condition of its surrender.

"R. E. LEE,

"*General.*

"*LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT, commanding the Armies of the United States.*"

On the succeeding day General Grant returned the following reply :

"APRIL 8, 1865.

"TO GENERAL R. E. LEE, COMMANDING C. S. A.,

"GENERAL: Your note of the last evening, in reply to mine of the same date, asking the condition on which I will accept the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, is just received. In reply I would say that peace being my great desire, there is but one condition I would insist upon—namely, that the men and officers surrendered shall be disqualified for taking up arms again against the Government of the United States until properly exchanged. I will meet you, or will designate officers to meet any officers you might name for the same purpose, at any point agreeable to you, for the purpose of arranging definitely the terms upon which the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia will be received.

"U. S. GRANT,  
"Lieutenant-general."

General Lee immediately responded :

"APRIL 8, 1865.

"GENERAL: I received at a late hour your note of to-day. In mine of yesterday I did not intend to propose the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, but to ask the terms of your proposition. To be frank, I do not think the emergency has arisen to call for the surrender of this army, but as the restoration of peace should be the sole object of all, I desired to know whether your proposals would lead to that end. I cannot therefore meet you with a view to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia, but as far as your proposal may affect the Confederate States forces under my command and tend to the restoration of peace, I should be pleased to meet you at ten A. M. to-morrow on the old stage-road to Richmond, between the picket-lines of the two armies.

"R. E. LEE,  
General."

"LIEUTENANT-GENERAL GRANT."

When Lee in the afternoon reached the neighborhood of Appomattox Court-house, he was met by the intelligence of



the capture of the stores placed for his army at the station two miles beyond. Notwithstanding this overwhelming news, he determined to make one more effort to force himself through the Federal toils that encompassed him. Therefore he made preparations for battle, but under circumstances more desperate than had hitherto befallen the Army of Northern Virginia. The remnant of that noble army, now reduced to 10,000 effective men, was marshalled to cut its way through a host 75,000 strong; but, notwithstanding the stupendous odds, there was not in that little band a heart that quailed or a hand that trembled; there was not one of them who would not willingly have laid down his life in the cause they had so long maintained, and for the noble chief who had so often led them to victory.

On the evening of that day the last council of the leaders of the Army of Northern Virginia was held around a bivouac-fire in the woods, there being present Generals Lee, Longstreet, Gordon, and Fitz Lee. This conference ended in a determination to make a renewed effort on the following morning to break through the impediments in front, of which there was still a possibility if only cavalry should be found and no heavy force of infantry had reached that point.

At three o'clock on the morning of the 9th of April the Confederates moved silently forward. The advance under Gordon, reaching the heights a little beyond the court-house at dawn, found that the route was obstructed by a large force of Federal cavalry. Gordon then deployed the Second corps, now less than 2000 strong and supported by thirty pieces of artillery under General Long, with Fitz Lee's cavalry on the flank.

This artillery consisted of parts of the commands of Colonel Carter, Lieutenant-colonels Poague and Duke Johnson, and Major Stark, and the guns were served with the usual skill and gallantry. A well-directed fire from the artillery and an attack from the cavalry quickly dislodged the force in front. Gordon then advanced, but was arrested by a greatly superior force of the enemy's infantry, whereupon he informed General Lee that a powerful reinforcement was necessary to enable him to continue his advance.

Lee being unable to grant that request, but one course re-

mained. A flag of truce was sent to General Grant requesting a suspension of hostilities for the arrangement of preliminaries of surrender. Then an order to cease firing passed along the lines. This order, on being received by General Long, was sent by him, through Major Southall and other members of his staff, to the different batteries to direct them to discontinue firing. General Long then proceeded to the court-house.

On reaching that point he discovered that the order had not been carried to a battery that occupied the hill immediately above the village, which continued to fire rapidly at an advancing line of Federal infantry. He at once rode in person to the battery and gave the order to the captain to cease firing and to withdraw his battery to a point east of the town, where the artillery was ordered to be parked. These were the last shots fired by the Army of Northern Virginia.

Colonel C. S. Venable of General Lee's staff graphically tells what took place at headquarters on that eventful morning. His story is of great interest, as showing how reluctantly yet how nobly the heroic commander submitted to the inevitable after having till the last minute, like a lion at bay, faced the overwhelming force of his opponent:

"At three o'clock on the morning of that fatal day General Lee rode forward, still hoping that we might break through the countless hordes of the enemy who hemmed us in. Halting a short distance in rear of our van-guard, he sent me on to General Gordon to ask him if he could break through the enemy. I found General Gordon and General Fitz Lee on their front line in the dim light of the morning arranging an attack. Gordon's reply to the message (I give the expressive phrase of the gallant Georgian) was this: 'Tell General Lee I have fought my corps to a frazzle, and I fear I can do nothing unless I am heavily supported by Longstreet's corps.'

"When I bore this message back to General Lee he said, 'Then there is nothing left me but to go and see General Grant,\* and I would rather die a thousand deaths.'

\* Field's and Mahone's divisions of Longstreet's corps, staunch in the midst of all our disasters, were holding Meade back in our rear, and could not be spared for the attack.

"Convulsed with passionate grief, many were the wild words which we spoke as we stood around him. Said one, 'Oh, general, what will history say of the surrender of the army in the field?'

"He replied, 'Yes, I know they will say hard things of us: they will not understand how we were overwhelmed by numbers. But that is not the question, colonel: the question is, Is it right to surrender this army? If it is right, then I will take *all* the responsibility.'"

The artillery had been withdrawn from the heights, as above stated, and parked in the small valley east of the village, while the infantry, who were formed on the left, stacked arms and silently waited the result of the interview between the opposing commanders.

The flag of truce was sent out from General Gordon's lines. Grant had not yet come up, and while waiting for his arrival General Lee seated himself upon some rails which Colonel Talcott of the Engineers had fixed at the foot of an apple tree for his convenience. This tree was half a mile distant from the point where the meeting of Lee and Grant took place, yet widespread currency has been given to the story that the surrender took place under its shade, and "apple-tree" jewelry has been profusely distributed from the orchard in which it grew.

About 11 o'clock General Lee, accompanied only by Colonel Marshall of his staff, proceeded to the village to meet General Grant, who had now arrived. The meeting between the two renowned generals took place at the house of a Mr. McLean at Appomattox Court-house, to which mansion, after exchanging courteous salutations, they repaired to settle the terms on which the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia should be concluded.

A conversation here took place which General Grant, as he himself tells us, led to various subjects divergent from the immediate purpose of the meeting, talking of old army matters and comparing recollections with General Lee. As he says, the conversation grew so pleasant that he almost forgot the object of the meeting.

General Lee was obliged more than once to remind him of

this object, and it was some time before the terms of the surrender were written out. The written instrument of surrender covered the following points: Duplicate rolls of all the officers and men were to be made, and the officers to sign paroles for themselves and their men, all agreeing not to bear arms against the United States unless regularly exchanged. The arms, artillery, and public property were to be turned over to an officer appointed to receive them, the officers retaining their side-arms and private horses and baggage. In addition to this, General Grant permitted every man of the Confederate army who claimed to own a horse or mule to retain it for farming purposes, General Lee remarking that this would have a happy effect. As for the surrender by General Lee of his sword, a report of which has been widely circulated, General Grant disposes of it in the following words: "The much-talked of surrendering of Lee's sword and my handing it back, this and much more that has been said about it is the purest romance."

After completion of these measures General Lee remarked that his men were badly in need of food, that they had been living for several days on parched corn exclusively, and requested rations and forage for 25,000 men. These rations were granted out of the car-loads of Confederate provisions which had been stopped by the Federal cavalry. As for forage, Grant remarked that he was himself depending upon the country for that. The negotiations completed, General Lee left the house, mounted his horse, and rode back to headquarters.

It is impossible to describe the anguish of the troops when it was known that the surrender of the army was inevitable. Of all their trials, this was the greatest and hardest to endure. There was no consciousness of shame; each heart could boast with honest pride that its duty had been done to the end, and that still unsullied remained its honor. When, after his interview with Grant, General Lee again appeared, a shout of welcome instinctively ran through the army. But instantly recollecting the sad occasion that brought him before them, their shouts sank into silence, every hat was raised, and the bronzed faces of the thousands of grim warriors were bathed with tears.

As he rode slowly along the lines hundreds of his devoted veterans pressed around the noble chief, trying to take his hand, touch his person, or even lay a hand upon his horse, thus exhibiting for him their great affection. The general then, with head bare and tears flowing freely down his manly cheeks, bade adieu to the army. In a few words he told the brave men who had been so true in arms to return to their homes and become worthy citizens.

Thus closed the career of the noble Army of Northern Virginia.

At this point some extracts from General Lee's final report to President Davis, announcing the surrender, may be of interest. The report will be found in full in the Appendix:

"HIS EXCELLENCY JEFFERSON DAVIS,

"MR. PRESIDENT: It is with pain that I announce to Your Excellency the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. . . . Upon arriving at Amelia Court-house on the morning of the 4th with the advance of the army, . . . and not finding the supplies ordered to be placed there, nearly twenty-four hours were lost in endeavoring to collect in the country subsistence for men and horses. This delay was fatal and could not be retrieved. . . . On the morning of the 9th . . . there were 7892 organized infantry with arms, with an average of seventy-five rounds of ammunition per man. . . . I have no accurate report of the cavalry, but believe it did not exceed 2100 effective men. The enemy was more than five times our numbers. If we could have forced our way one day longer, it would have been at a great sacrifice of life, and at its end I do not see how a surrender could have been avoided. The supplies ordered to Pamplin's Station from Lynchburg could not reach us, and the men, deprived of food and sleep for many days, were worn-out and exhausted.

"With great respect, your obedient servant,

"R. E. LEE,

"General."

It will be noticed that a large seeming discrepancy exists

between the 10,000 men here mentioned as effective, and the 28,231 men and officers paroled. It will also be observed that General Lee asked for rations for 25,000 men. This difference is easily explainable. Of effective infantry, with arms and in fighting condition, there were less than 8000, and about 2000 cavalry. The remainder of the paroled men were composed of unarmed stragglers who had come up since the halt of the army, and of extra-duty and detailed men of every description, the sum of whom very greatly swelled the aggregate present, while adding nothing to the fighting capacity of the army.

During the proceedings above described not a sound of exultation arose from the Army of the Potomac, and when it was seen how small was the number that had so long opposed their proud array, the honest and brave men of the Union army accorded the meed of honor where honor was due.

Three days after the surrender the Army of Northern Virginia had dispersed in every direction, and three weeks later the veterans of a hundred battles had changed the musket and the sword for the implements of husbandry. It is worthy of remark that never before was there an army disbanded with less disorder. Thousands of soldiers were set adrift on the world without a penny in their pockets to enable them to reach their homes. Yet none of the scenes of riot that often follow the disbanding of armies marked their course.

The surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia was the closing scene in the drama of war and bloodshed whose successive acts reached from Manassas to the heights of Appomattox Court-house. The terrible struggle between Grant and Lee had occupied nearly a year, from their meeting in deadly conflict at the Wilderness on the 4th of May, 1864, to the last scene on the 9th of April, 1865. During that period Lee had most thoroughly proved his soldiership and destroyed of the army opposed to him a number considerably exceeding his whole force, while not until the process of attrition had reduced his army to a mere handful of half-starved and utterly worn-out men did he yield to the overwhelming force which closed from him every avenue of retreat.

This fact was impressed upon the writer by a conversation

that took place between General Lee and General Meade on the afternoon of the day of the surrender. Meade had made a friendly visit to Lee at his headquarters, and in the course of the conversation remarked, "Now that the war may be considered over, I hope you will not deem it improper for me to ask, for my personal information, the strength of your army during the operations about Richmond and Petersburg."

General Lee replied: "At no time did my force exceed 35,000 men; often it was less."

With a look of surprise Meade answered, "General, you amaze me! We always estimated your force at about 70,000 men."

This conversation was repeated to the writer by General Lee immediately after his visitor had withdrawn.

An amusing portion of the conversation between Meade and Lee has been published by General de Chanal, a French officer, who was present. He states that during the interview Lee turned to Meade, who had been an associate with him as an officer of Engineers in the "old army," and said pleasantly, "Meade, years are telling on you: your hair is getting quite gray."

"Ah, General Lee," was Meade's prompt reply, "it is not the work of years: *you* are responsible for my gray hairs."

General Hunt also had an interview with Lee on that day, which he describes in the following language:

"At Appomattox I spent half an hour with General Lee in his tent. He looked, of course, weary and careworn, but in this supreme hour was the same self-possessed, dignified gentleman that I had always known him. After a time General Wise came in, and in a few minutes I took my leave, asking General Lee how General Long was and where I would find him. He answered, 'Long will be very glad to see you, but you will find him much changed in appearance; he has suffered much from neuralgia of the face. He is now with General Longstreet's corps.'

"He then described the place to me, but General Wilcox, coming in, offered to ride with me to General Long's camp, where I spent the afternoon. Long had been a lieutenant in

my battery before the war, and we were old friends. This was the last time that I saw General Lee—a truly great man, as great in adversity as in prosperity.”

Shortly after the surrender General Lee returned to Richmond, riding slowly from the scene on his iron-gray, “Traveler,” who had borne him so nobly through all the years of the war. His parting with his soldiers was pathetic, and everywhere on his road to Richmond he received tokens of admiration and respect from both friend and foe.

His soldierly habits remained unchanged. At one house where he stopped for the night he declined the comfortable bed that had been prepared for him, but slept upon his blanket, which he had spread on the floor. Stopping at the house of his brother, Charles Carter Lee, in Powhatan, he spent the evening in conversation, but at bedtime, despite the fact that rain was falling, he took up his quarters in his well-worn tent, in which he had spent the greater part of the time during the last year’s campaign.

On reaching Richmond the party passed sadly through a portion of the city which had been destroyed by the conflagration, and which exhibited a distressing scene of blackened ruins. He was quickly recognized, and the inhabitants flocked out in multitudes to meet him, cheering and waving hats and handkerchiefs. General Lee, to whom this ovation could not have been agreeable, simply raised his hat in reply to the greetings of the citizens, and rode on to his house in Franklin street. The closing of its doors upon his retiring form was the final scene in that long drama of war in which he had for years been the central figure. He had returned to that private family life for which his soul had yearned even in the most active years of the war, and had become once more, what he had always desired to be, a peaceful citizen of a peaceful land.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### *GENERAL LEE AS A SOLDIER.*

Early Military Labors.—Engineering and Organizing Abilities.—Breadth of View.—Skill as a Strategist and Tactician.—Diversity of Methods.—Influence over his Men.—Ability in Defence; in Attack.—Comparison with Other Soldiers of the War; with Celebrated Generals.—Lee as a Man.—His Guiding Principle.—Lack of Ambition.—Sense of Justice.—Firmness in Decision.—His Spirit Reflected in the Army.—Final Summary.

WITH the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, General Lee's military career ended. My intimate relations with him continued to the close of his life.

I frequently visited him at his home in Lexington, Va., and saw him in the discharge of his duties as a college president, but before laying aside my pen it is proper that I should attempt some estimate of him as a soldier and a man.

General Lee was both by nature and by education a great soldier. By diligent study under the most favorable conditions, and by long and varied experience, he became a master of the science of war in all its branches. In early life he was especially distinguished as an engineer. All the important points from the coast of Georgia to New York bear witness to his engineering skill, and his name will be identified with the Rip Raps, Fort Carroll, and the defences of New York harbor until those granite structures crumble into dust.

Perhaps even more important than his work on the Atlantic coast was that on the Mississippi and Des Moines rapids, of which General Meigs, U. S. A., has kindly furnished for this volume a highly interesting account.

The Mexican War opened to him a wider field, and the quick eye of General Scott discovered in the young captain of Engineers "a man of all kinds of merit."

On assuming command in Virginia in April, 1861, General

Lee at once showed his talents for administration and organization. He found the country almost destitute of the essentials of war, and, as if by magic, he created and equipped an army. His very ability as an organizer made many doubt whether he could be great in other directions, and it was only after successful trial that they were willing to recognize his wonderful versatility.

It was with surprise that they saw him showing himself equal to all the demands made upon him as the commander of a great army in the field. As they looked on, their surprise changed to admiration; the glory of the engineer and organizer was first dimmed, and then eclipsed, by that of the strategist and tactician.

The great soldier is something more than a fighter of battles. He must have a breadth of view sufficient to take in widely-separated movements and to form great and far-reaching combinations. That General Lee had this breadth of view, this subtle intuition, which constitutes the very flower of military genius, is shown by the whole history of the war. The reader will recall how, when he was contemplating an attack on McClellan on the Chickahominy, he sent Jackson to make a vigorous movement in the Valley. He nicely calculated the moral effect of that movement. He intended it to alarm the authorities at Washington—to hold McDowell in position near the Federal capital, and thus prevent his joining in the coming battle.

The Pennsylvania campaign had a wider outlook: it was charged with great possibilities. The defeat of Meade's army in Pennsylvania might be expected to be much more than the simple defeat of that one army. Its effect would be felt on the Mississippi; Grant's army would be needed in the East; the siege of Vicksburg would be raised, and Pemberton's army released for active service. What else might follow it was easy to conjecture. Lee fought, and knew that he fought, for a great stake. That he did not succeed and that the movement came too late, even if it had been successful, to affect the result at Vicksburg, detracts nothing from the brilliancy of the conception. The one pertinent thing is that the Confederate

general saw that by a single bold and successful stroke it might be possible virtually to end the war and secure the independence of the Southern Confederacy. That success was possible is shown by the narrow chance by which it failed. It has been well said that when the Confederate charge at Cemetery Ridge for a while seemed successful, the Muse of History took up her pen to record the birth of a new nation.

[Breadth of plan is often neutralized by neglect of details. General Lee did not make that mistake. Before a battle he neglected nothing that might be needful either for attack or defence; in the battle he was quick to see and prompt to meet emergencies. He knew his men, rank and file—what they could do, and how far he might trust them. He was careful to know the ground on which he was to operate, and also to seize and use every advantage of position: he made a league with rivers and mountains and mountain-passes. He studied his adversary, knew his peculiarities, and adapted himself to them. His own methods no one could foresee; he varied them with every change in the commanders opposed to him. He had one method with McClellan, another with Pope, another with Hooker, and yet another with Grant. But for a knowledge of his own resources, of the field, and of his adversary some of his movements might have been rash. As it was, they were wisely bold. Because he was so attentive to details, and guarded so rigidly against the accidents of battle, he was sometimes supposed to be over-cautious; because he sometimes attacked greatly superior numbers or divided his forces, he was often thought over-bold. [The truth is, that there was in him that harmonious blending of caution and boldness without which a general must often either rashly expose himself to defeat or lose an opportunity for victory.]

[Whatever other qualities a man may have, he cannot be a great soldier unless he has the power to win the confidence and inspire the enthusiasm of his men.] General Lee had this power; few men have had it in a higher degree. No privation or suffering or disaster could shake the confidence of his men in him. In the darkest hour the sight of his form or the mention of his name stirred the hearts of his veterans. They spoke of

him with an affection and pride that have not been dimmed by the lapse of years.

It is sometimes said that while General Lee was without a peer in defence, he was not so great in attack. That he was great in defence is witnessed by the series of combats from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor. Hardly anything in the history of warfare, ancient or modern, equals the skill and adroitness with which he met and repulsed Grant's obstinate and persevering assaults. But, on the other hand, in the second battle of Manassas and at Chancellorsville he was the aggressor; he went to seek the enemy. And even in those cases in which he was resisting the enemy's advance he often struck a blow in preference to waiting to receive one.

But perhaps the readiest way to fix Lee's position and to realize his greatness would be to compare him with others. It is significant that in attempting to do this no one ever thinks of comparing him with any but men of the first rank. Among the distinguished soldiers on the Confederate side his position was peculiar. He came from the old army with a brilliant reputation, and during the war he occupied the most prominent and responsible position. It is no injustice either to the living or the dead to say that by common consent he holds the first place among Southern soldiers.

Among the dead heroes of the war Albert Sidney Johnston challenges admiring attention. He had great qualities; anything that skill, courage, and a lofty, unselfish character might accomplish seemed possible to him; but he died at Shiloh.

Jackson was Lee's most trusted lieutenant, and deserved all the confidence that his commander reposed in him. In the sphere of his operations he had no superior, nor can it be known that he would not have shown himself equal to a greater sphere. All honor to that brave, true soldier! but it would not be proper to compare him with his chief. There was no rivalry between them living; let there be none now that they are dead. There was A. P. Hill, a modest man, always ready; one of the finest soldiers in the army: he had the best division when he had a division, and one of the best corps when he had a corps. Lee and Jackson agreed in

their admiration of Hill, and both mentioned him in the delirium of death; but no one thinks of comparing him with Lee.

There is a sort of infallibility in an undivided popular judgment, and the whole South looked to Lee as its greatest man. So impressed was Grant with the devotion of the Southern people to Lee that after the surrender at Appomattox he sought his influence, being convinced that if he should advise the surrender of all the Southern armies, the advice would be followed with alacrity. And in his report of the operations of the Army of the Potomac in 1864-65 he attributes it to General Lee's example that, as he says, "the armies lately under his leadership are at their homes, desiring peace and quiet, and their arms are in the hands of our ordnance officers."

Nothing is more characteristic of General Lee, or reveals more clearly his simple moral grandeur, than the fact that when no more could be accomplished by arms he used his influence to promote peace and good feeling toward the people against whom he had been waging war.

Of the great soldiers opposed to General Lee, some may have equalled him in single qualities, none in the combination of qualities. They were great in some directions; he in many. Let it not be forgotten that his was a long and varied career, and that he was distinguished in every part of it. He was called on to do many things, and he did them all in a masterly way.

In judging him account must be taken not only of what he did in the war between the States, but also of what he did before the Mexican War, in the Mexican War, and after the Mexican War, and in the last years of his life. When all these things are considered, and when we take into the account his perfect acquaintance with his art, his organizing power, his skill in combining, his wisdom in planning, his boldness and vigor in execution, his power to awaken enthusiasm and to lead men, we must place him first among the great soldiers of both armies. The time has not yet come to compare him with soldiers of the past and of other lands. They show great in the haze of time and distance, but the time will come when by

the suffrages of all he will take his place among the greatest of those who have marshalled armies to battle.

We turn now from Lee as a soldier to Lee as a man; and here it is difficult to find suitable words in which to speak of him. In a private conversation a gentleman once said to an officer who had been intimately associated with him, "Most men have their weak point. What was General Lee's?" After a thoughtful pause, the answer was, "I really do not know." This answer may be taken for that of the great majority of those who knew him personally or who have studied his character. He was singularly free from the faults which so often mar the character of great men. He was without envy, jealousy, or suspicion, self-seeking, or covetousness; there was nothing about him to diminish or chill the respect which all men felt for him. General Grant speaks of him as "a large, austere man, difficult of approach to his subordinates." "Austere" is not the word to use in speaking of him. I should rather say that he was clothed with a natural dignity which could either repel or invite as occasion might require. He could pass with perfect ease from familiar, cheerful conversation to earnest conference, and from earnest conference to authoritative command. He had a pleasant humor, could see the ludicrous side of things, and could enjoy an anecdote or a joke. But even in his lightest moods he was still the cultivated gentleman, having that just degree of reserve that suited his high and responsible position.

His character was perfectly simple; there were in it no folds or sinuosities. It was simple because guided by a single principle. It is common to say that this principle was duty. This is not the whole truth. Duty is faithfulness to obligation, and is measured by obligation. That which moulded General Lee's life was something more than duty. It was a fine soldierly instinct that made him feel that it was his business to devote his life and powers to the accomplishment of high impersonal ends. Duty is the highest conception of Roman stoicism; it was the ambition of the Christian soldier to serve. General Grant interpreted him correctly when he said, "I knew there was no use to urge him to anything against his ideas of right."

If there are any who blame him for resigning his position in the United States army and taking part with the South, they must at the same time acknowledge that he was influenced by no unworthy motive. What he did involved sacrifice of feeling, of position, and of interest: he might have had the highest place in the old army; he had but to consent to take it. A man of smaller mould might have been dazzled and attracted by the prospect of leading a successful revolution and establishing a new nation, but in all my association with him I saw no indication that any feeling of personal ambition was present with him. If he had such feeling it was checked by a consciousness of the great interests confided to him.

As he appeared to me, so he appeared to others. When the Confederate capital was transferred from Montgomery to Richmond, the Virginia forces, of which he was commander-in-chief, were incorporated in the Confederate army. He then lost his independent command. While the transfer was yet in contemplation the Confederate authorities were anxious to know whether an apparent lowering of his rank would offend or make him less zealous in the service of the Confederacy. When Mr. Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President, mentioned the matter to him, he promptly said, "Mr. Stephens, I am willing to serve anywhere where I can be useful."

[It was in perfect accord with his character that he was no stickler for rank or position. In the early part of the war the positions held by him were not such as to attract public attention; the duties assigned to him, while very important, were not of a showy kind. Others were winning distinction in the field and rising into prominence, while he was in the background.] No great laurels could be won in the mountains of West Virginia or in strengthening the coast defences of South Carolina and Georgia. In the estimation of the general public his reputation was suffering; it was said that his former distinction had been too easily won. During this time he uttered no word of complaint, and gave no intimation that he felt himself in any way wronged or overlooked. One might wonder whether this sweetness of spirit, this calmness, this cheerful content, did not spring from a consciousness of power and

assured belief that he had only to bide his time; but a close acquaintance with the workings of his mind convinced me that it was rather from a single-hearted desire to be useful, and the conviction that the best way to be useful was to work contentedly and to the best of his ability in the place assigned him.

[It was his constant feeling that he was living and working to an end that constituted the source of General Lee's magnanimity and put him far above any petty jealousy. He looked at everything as unrelated to himself, and only as it affected the cause he was serving.] This is shown in his treatment of his subordinates. He had no favorites, no unworthy partialities. On one occasion he spoke highly of an officer and remarked that he ought to be promoted. Some surprise was expressed at this, and it was said that that particular officer had sometimes spoken disparagingly of him. "I cannot help that," said the general; "he is a good soldier, and would be useful in a higher position." As he judged of the work of others, so he judged of his own. A victory gave him pleasure only as it contributed to the end he had in view, an honorable peace and the happiness of his country. It was for this cause that even his greatest victories produced in him no exaltation of spirits: he saw the end yet far off. He even thought more of what might have been done than of what was actually accomplished. In the same way a reverse gave him pain, not as a private but as a public calamity. He was the ruling spirit of his army. His campaigns and battles were his own.

He frequently consulted others that his own judgment might be informed, not that he might lean on their judgment or advice. It was because he felt himself so completely the commander of his army that he sometimes assumed the responsibility of the failure of movements which a less strong and generous spirit would have made his subordinates bear.

There was no hesitation or vacillation about him. When he had once formed a plan the orders for its execution were positive, decisive, and final. The army which he so long commanded is a witness for him. He imbued it with his own spirit; it reflected his energy and devotion. Such an army, so responsive to orders, so rapid in movement, so sturdy and prompt in



action, so often victorious, sometimes checked but never defeated, so patient in the endurance of hardships, yielding at last rather to the friction of battle and the pressure of hunger than to the power of the enemy, gives indication that its commander was gifted with that imperial quality, the power to command.

As I recall the past, and the four years of the war come back and move in silent procession before me, I can easily forget that more than twenty years have passed away since I selected for General Lee the spot at Appomattox where his tent was pitched for the last time. His image stands out clearly before me, but it is unnecessary to describe his personal appearance. The majesty of his form will endure in marble and bronze, while his memory will pass down the ages as representing all that is greatest in military art, as well as what is truest, bravest, and noblest in human life—a soldier who never failed in duty, a man who feared and trusted God and served his generation.

“Vanquished,

He was yet a victor.

To honor virtue is to honor him;

To reverence wisdom is to do him reverence.

In life he was a model for all who live;

In death

He left a heritage to all.

One such example is worth more to earth

Than the stained triumphs of ten thousand Cæsars.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *PRESIDENT OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE.*

Return to Richmond.—Anecdote.—Devotion of his Friends.—Removal to Cartersville.—Offers of Aid.—Letter to Grant.—Idea of Writing a History of the War.—Circular.—Failure to Obtain Material.—Elected President of Washington College.—Provisional Letter of Acceptance.—Installed in the Office.—The Condition and History of the College.—New Studies Introduced.—Elective Studies Inaugurated.—Mode of Discipline.—His Influence over the Students.—Accuracy of Memory.—No Excesses Permitted to the Students.—The Christmas Vacation Reduced.—Breadth in Religious Views.—His Innate Piety.—Regard of the Faculty.—Refuses to Accept Gifts from the Faculty.—Lee's Estimate of his Powers.—His Lack of Undue Ambition.

AFTER the Army of Northern Virginia had surrendered at Appomattox Court-house, General Lee, as has been described in a previous chapter, joined his family at Richmond, where they had continued to reside. His disposition of mind was averse to a public reception. He hoped to re-enter his domestic portals unobserved, and to enjoy in quiet and privacy the reunion with the objects of his love. But it was impossible to prevent the heralding of his coming. Upon his approach to the city he found the whole population gathered to testify its devotion. As he passed through crowded streets Union veterans pressed Confederate soldiers in the throng, eager to catch a glimpse of the great soldier. Upon every hand manifestations of respect in ways of silent sincerity were shown him, and men of the Federal army vied in the universal tribute. The crowd attended him to the very threshold of his residence, and there drew back in quiet deference as he withdrew into the sacred privacy of home.

An eye-witness who was at the time a guest of General Lee recounts an incident illustrative of the respect and affection which pervaded the city. One morning an Irishman who had gone through the war in the Federal ranks appeared at

the door with a basket well filled with provisions, and insisted upon seeing General Lee. The servant protested and offered to carry a message, but Pat was not to be put off. The general, hearing the altercation, came from an adjoining room, and was greeted with profuse terms of admiration: "Sure, sir, you are a great soldier, and it's I that know it. I've been fighting against you all these years, and many a hard knock we've had. But, general, I honor you for it; and now they tell me you are poor and in want, and I've brought this basket and beg you to take it from a soldier." The general, touched by this spirit of sympathy, thanked him most kindly, and said, "My man, I am not in need, but if you will carry your basket to the hospital you will find some poor fellow glad to be remembered by so generous a foe."

There was a continuous stream of callers at the residence. Officers of both armies were received with the cordiality and courtesy which were innate. Frankness and chivalry, marks of the true soldier, characterized his reception of men who had held rank in the Federal army. His sword was sheathed, and no rancor or petty animosity existed in his mind to embitter the amenities of social intercourse. "For his own people he had words of sympathy, and always advised moderation and quiet acquiescence in the conditions of defeat."

The assassination of President Lincoln renewed the storm of passionate hatred against the South. The imprisonment of Mr. Davis and the bitter appeals voiced by the Northern press for his execution created grave apprehensions in the minds of friends as to General Lee's safety, and in the warmth of their devotion they urged him to find a secure retreat in the mountains, where they would be ready to devote their lives as a sacrifice for his protection.

This solicitude was shared throughout the South. An incident is related which shows that it rendered even those who were shattered in fortune oblivious of their own condition and generous of their remaining estate. Two Confederate soldiers in tattered garments and with bodies emaciated by prison confinement called upon General Lee. They told him that they were the delegates "of sixty other fellows around the corner

who are too ragged to come themselves." They tendered their loved general a home in the mountains, promising him a comfortable house and a good farm. "We hear," they said, "that Underwood intends having you indicted for treason and rebellion. But there is a defile near the farm we offer, and there the whole Federal army can be defied."

This heartfelt exhibition of fealty brought tears to General Lee's eyes, but he resolutely refused to accept the proffer, and reasoned with his devoted callers against the propriety of urging him to accept the life of a fugitive. He finally substituted for their ragged suits some clothing of his own, and the representatives of the assembly "around the corner" departed with elated spirits. There were almost daily episodes typical of this single-hearted adherence.

But his residence at Richmond grew irksome. There could be no seclusion. The rest and quiet for which he so longed were disturbed by continuous attentions, which could not have been repressed without some degree of discourtesy. Mrs. Lee was almost a confirmed invalid, and for her declining health the devoted husband felt deep anxiety. His longing at this time is best expressed in a passage from a letter to General Long:

"I am looking for some little quiet house in the woods where I can procure shelter and my daily bread if permitted by the victor. I wish to get Mrs. Lee out of the city as soon as practicable."

A friend enabled him to realize his wish by offering him a country-house near Cartersville in Cumberland county. Thither he soon removed, but he was not destined long to enjoy the pleasures of retirement. Into this abode of peace and quiet business propositions, friendly proffers, and even tenders of pecuniary assistance, followed him. An English nobleman desired him to accept a mansion and an estate commensurate with his individual merits and the greatness of an historic family. But he would not desert his native State. She lay prostrate through the devastations of war; it would take years of devotion to her interests to bring her back to her former condition, and one of the noblest of her sons could suffer no beguilement

to lead him away from her distress. He responded, "I must abide her fortunes and share her fate."

Before leaving Richmond, General Lee wrote to General Grant the appended letter, which forcibly corroborates the fact of his entire acceptance of the situation and his desire to comply with all the terms of the surrender:

"RICHMOND, VA., April 25, 1865.

"LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT, COMMANDING THE  
ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,

"GENERAL: I have awaited your arrival in Richmond to propose that the men and officers of the Army of Northern Virginia, captured or surrendered on the 2d and 6th of April, or since that time, may be granted the same terms as given to those surrendered by me on the 9th. I see no benefit that will result by retaining them in prison, but, on the contrary, think good may be accomplished by returning them to their homes. Indeed, if all now held as prisoners of war were liberated in the same manner, I think it would be advantageous. Should there, however, be objections to this course, I would ask that exceptions be made in favor of the invalid officers and men, and that they be allowed to return to their homes on parole. I call your attention particularly to General Ewell, the members of the reserves, local-defence troops, naval battalion, etc. The local troops were not performing military duty, and the naval battalion fell in the line of march of the army for subsistence and protection.

"Understanding that you may not reach Richmond for some days, I take the liberty to forward this application for your consideration.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"R. E. LEE."

In the partial seclusion of his country retreat General Lee gave serious attention to plans for improving his personal resources. His fortune had disappeared in the years of warfare, and the future maintenance of his family became a question

of primary importance. Offers of money, of land, of corporation stock to secure the mere endorsement of his name, still poured in upon him. But there was no proposition as yet that involved compensation in direct return for his individual labor. Yet nothing less honorable than this could be acceptable to him. Gratuities, however richly merited in return for his sacrifices, he could not consent to receive. Labor and wages constituted in his mind the sole solution of the problem of gaining a livelihood.

During this interval of expectancy General Lee conceived the idea of collecting material upon which he might base an authentic history of his various campaigns. The value of such a work in the series of war histories would have been incalculable. The military education, equipoise of mind, and attributes of charity and truth combined in the author must have won a generous welcome for his production from candid students of the war. In furtherance of this project General Lee sent out to many officers a circular, of which we subjoin a copy of that received by General Ewell:

"NEAR CARTERSVILLE, CUMBERLAND CO., VA.,

"July 31, 1867.

"GENERAL: I am desirous that the bravery and devotion of the Army of Northern Virginia be correctly transmitted to posterity. This is the only tribute that can be paid to the worth of its noble officers and soldiers. And I am anxious to collect the necessary information for the history of its campaigns, including the operations in the Valley of Western Virginia, from its organization to its final surrender.

"I have copies of my reports of the battles, commencing with those around Richmond, to the close of the Pennsylvania campaign, but no report of the campaign in 1864 and of the operations of the winter of 1864-65 to the 1st of April, 1865, has been written, and the corps and division reports for that period, which had been sent to headquarters before the abandonment of the lines before Petersburg, with all the records, returns, maps, plans, etc., were destroyed the day before the army reached Appomattox Court-house. My letter-books,

public and confidential, were also destroyed, and the regular returns transmitted to the adjutant-general at Richmond have been burned also.

"Should you have reports of the operations of your command within the period specified (from 1st of May, 1864, to 1st of April, 1865), or should you be able to renew them, I will be greatly obliged to you to send them to me. Should you be able to procure reports of other commanders, returns of the effective strength of the army at any of the battles from the first Manassas to the 1st of April, 1865, or copies of my official orders, letters, etc., you will confer a favor by sending them to me.

"Very respectfully and truly yours,

"R. E. LEE."

This endeavor to supply the missing records of the war met with persistent embarrassment. His application to the War Department at Washington for the privilege of copying such official documents as might aid him in the preparation of his volume was refused, for at that time the archives of the Confederacy were an undigested mass and preserved in secret alcoves. The spirit of historical research had not yet successfully combated the prejudices of strife, and the records of the Confederacy were regarded as trophies rather than as rich historical material.

When General Lee's intention of writing his military history became known, it excited the liveliest interest among army instructors and commandants of military establishments in foreign countries. An officer of the German army desired the privilege of translating it into the language of his country. The obstacles, however, that lay in the way of this cherished work proved insurmountable. The project, as conceived by General Lee, had not been to rear a memorial to his own military genius, but to vindicate and set forth the valor of his soldiers. He relinquished the work with less reluctance because he felt that its truths and indispensable facts must expose certain persons to severe censure.

Shortly after the close of the war a trust was conferred upon

General Lee which became his life-work, and in the honorable execution of which he continued until his lamented death. He was elected by the Board of Trustees of Washington College, at Lexington, president of that institution on August 4, 1865. The formal notification of the Board's action came to him as a complete surprise. Before the meeting of the trustees, Hon. Bolivar Christian of Staunton, a member of the Board, had endeavored to discover if General Lee would be willing to accept so arduous an office, but General Lee's answer was delayed in the mails until after Colonel Christian had left Staunton to attend the meeting of the trustees. That answer so decidedly remonstrated against the intended proposal of his name for the position that knowledge of its contents might have influenced Colonel Christian to withdraw the proposition.

But before its reception the presidency had been conferred by unanimous vote upon General Lee. The rector of the Board, Hon. John W. Brockenbrough, was selected to convey to him the notification of his election. It was two weeks before a formal reply was made to the tender, and then in a characteristic letter General Lee without reservation discussed the embarrassments and exactions of the proffered place, and with marked self-abnegation considered the possible detriment to the historic school that his installation as its president might bring. He wrote the trustees thus:

"POWHATAN COUNTY, August 24, 1865.

"GENTLEMEN: I have delayed for some days replying to your letter of the 5th inst., informing me of my election by the Board of Trustees to the presidency of Washington College, from a desire to give the subject due consideration. Fully impressed with the responsibilities of the office, I have feared that I should be unable to discharge its duties to the satisfaction of the trustees or to the benefit of the country. The proper education of youth requires not only great ability, but, I fear, more strength than I now possess, for I do not feel able to undergo the labor of conducting classes in regular courses of instruction: I could not therefore undertake more than the general administration and supervision of the institution.



"There is another subject which has caused me serious reflection, and is, I think, worthy of the consideration of the Board. Being excluded from the terms of amnesty in the proclamation of the President of the United States of the 29th of May last, and an object of censure to a portion of the country, I have thought it probable that my occupation of the position of president might draw upon the college a feeling of hostility, and I should therefore cause injury to an institution which it would be my highest desire to advance.

"I think it the duty of every citizen, in the present condition of the country, to do all in his power to aid in the restoration of peace and harmony, and in no way to oppose the policy of the State or General Government directed to that object. It is particularly incumbent on those charged with the instruction of the young to set them an example of submission to authority, and I could not consent to be the cause of animadversion upon the college.

"Should you, however, take a different view, and think that my services in the position tendered to me by the Board will be advantageous to the college and country, I will yield to your judgment and accept it, otherwise I must most respectfully decline the office.

"Begging you to express to the trustees of the college my heartfelt gratitude for the honor conferred upon me, and requesting you to accept my cordial thanks for the kind manner in which you have communicated their decision,

"I am, gentlemen, with great respect,

"Your most obedient servant,

"R. E. LEE.

"Messrs. JOHN W. BROCKENBROUGH, Rector; S. McD. REID,  
ALFRED LEYBURN, HORATIO THOMPSON, D. D., BOLIVAR } *Committee.*  
CHRISTIAN, T. J. KIRKPATRICK,

The Board of Trustees immediately assured General Lee that his apprehensions of damage to the college, as resultant from his assumption of the presidency, were groundless, and again pressed upon him an acceptance of the place. His installation occurred October 2, 1865, the oath of office being administered by Rev. W. S. White in the presence of the

trustees, faculty, and students. A new impetus was at once given to this venerable college, which had suffered greatly in the war. Its funds no longer furnished a reliable income, and even their actual value was yet a problem of the future. The campus had been despoiled by military marauders, who carried their spoliation to the libraries and laboratory of the college. But four professors and forty students were at the institution when General Lee undertook the exacting task of restoring it to its former prosperity and reputation.

Not only was the material destruction within the buildings a serious embarrassment, but far greater was the obstacle to any rehabilitation that the reduced circumstances of the people presented. Washington College had enjoyed a long career. It was the earliest classical school established in the Shenandoah Valley. It was originally instituted in 1749, and won so excellent a reputation that General Washington determined to give it permanency. The legislature had presented him with shares in the "Old James River Company," but to their acceptance he had attached the condition that he be allowed to appropriate them "to some public purpose in the upper part of the State, such as the education of the poor, particularly of such as have fallen in the defence of their country." In pursuance of this condition he gave to what became Washington College one hundred of these valuable shares. It was a magnificent endowment, and the academy, which previously had been peripatetic, became from that time a permanent college.

General Lee gave himself with unrestrained ardor to the labor of improving the impoverished college. In this laudable purpose the trustees heartily co-operated with him, and were inspired by the hope and zeal exhibited by the new president. His first attention was devoted to the better equipment of the scientific departments. Apparatus for the laboratory was purchased. The library was replenished. The dismantled buildings were reconstructed or repaired. Three new chairs were instituted—Physics, Mathematics, and Modern Languages—with a subordinate classification of correlated studies which embraced Engineering, Astronomy, and English Philology. He also suggested chairs of the English Language and of

Applied Chemistry, and wished to add a School of Commerce. The Lexington Law School was, just before his death, embraced within the collegiate jurisdiction.

While General Lee thus added to the curriculum the above-named modern and practical studies, he in no sense opposed the study of the classical languages. He fully recognized their utility as a means of refinement, of mental discipline, and of the acquirement of a copious vocabulary. In devoting his energies to the institution of modern branches of study he was but supplying manifest defects in the existing course. Yet he was innately inclined toward the practical in education. In writing to General John B. Gordon he declares: "The thorough education of all classes of the people is the most efficacious means, in my opinion, of promoting the prosperity of the South; and the material interests of the citizens, as well as their moral and intellectual culture, depend upon its establishment. The text-books of our schools, therefore, should not only be clear, systematic, and scientific, but they should be acceptable to parents and pupils in order to enlist the minds of all in the subjects."

One most important innovation introduced by General Lee was the system of elective studies. The compulsory curriculum was discarded, and the student permitted to select the branches he could pursue with the most benefit or with more direct influence upon his future avocation. The only limitation imposed was that the choice of studies should embrace sufficient to fully employ the student's time.

The mode of discipline introduced merits extended notice. It was a departure from the time-sanctioned tyrannical control exercised by the heads of schools. No espionage was practised—that system which lessens self-respect by placing it beneath the ban of suspicion, or which works yet greater harm by substituting for frankness and openness avoidance and concealment.

He became personally acquainted with each student, and so accurate was his remembrance of their names that when, on one occasion, a name was read from the college-rolls that was unfamiliar to him, he required it to be read again, and repeated

the name with a marked emphasis on each syllable, adding in a tone of self-reproach, "I have no recollection of a student of that name. It is very strange that I have forgotten him. I thought I knew every one in the college. How long has he been here?" He would not be satisfied until an investigation showed that the student had recently entered and during his absence, so that he had never seen him.

It was his constant desire to cultivate the individual sense of honor of those under him, and to erect no factitious barriers of rank between faculty and students. The respect exacted from the latter was the natural reverence due to superior age and experience. A pride in good order was inspired, and obedience to the rules and the conduct of gentlemen were natural corollaries. He did not assert military discipline, as might have been expected from his West Point career, but recognized the fact that the students were to be fitted for the avocations of civil life, and that the rigor of military methods was not here desirable. His own manner was dignified, and there was a formal presence suggestive of army leadership, yet in his mode of college government no trace of the habits of the soldier appeared.

He won the confidence of students, and their affections soon went out toward him. With their instincts of honor always uppermost, their self-respect carefully preserved, and their pride in the institution fostered, discipline was apparently relaxed, while in fact it was precise and effective. Seldom was there a breach of decorum. The students honored and loved the president, and sedulously avoided transgressions that would cause him pain. He fully appreciated the natural waywardness of youth, and while he was firm in endeavors to repress it, he was never so uncharitable as to act summarily against a student and affix the stigma of expulsion upon a young career. He preferred to acquaint the parent with the course being pursued by the son; and when it was manifest that collegiate life could no longer prove beneficial, a quiet withdrawal by parental request was the honorable subterfuge adopted.

He tolerated no drones in the college classes. While never